

" DRIFTWOOD "

PROPERTY OF JOHNNIE SPEER

" DRIFTWOOD "

CAST

CAPTAIN AMOS BARTON CHARACTER LEAD
EDWARD ELMER JUVENILE LEAD
JOEY CLARK JUVENILE
BEN COOK CHARACTER COMEDY

FLOTSOM LEAD
SIMONSON CHARACTER COMEDY

SETTING

The interior of a light house. Doors L. and R, Window C.
with sea backing.

PROPS

Basket of fish
Fishing nets
Table
Chairs
Letter loaded

" DRIFTWOOD "

JOEY

(ENTERS WITH A BASKET OF FISH) Flotsom! Simonson! Well, hey somebody answer. Captain Barton.

AMOS

(ENTERS FROM L. U.) Ho ' Joey, I was just up in the light house tower. I saw you comin' from Stickney's reef.

JOEY

Yes, I brought some fish for your dinner, Captain. (SETS THEM ON TABLE) Your sister, Simonson, can cook them for you. Say captain is Flotsom about?

AMOS

(SMILES) I thought that would be the next question? Joey you're just shining right upon to my little gal aint ye?

JOEY

Flotsom and I have always liked each ---ever since we was kids and used to play in front of this old light houseO

AMOS

(LAUGHING) Ever since you was kids. What are you now but kids. Well, Joey, my boy I think you'll find Flotsom up in the tower. Go on up and see her. (JOEY EXITS L. U.) Great boy! Joey! I'll never forget how good he was to me when I was sick with the fever.

SIMONSON

(ENTERS R. U.) I'm telling you, Ben Cook, there's no use talking. I'm a perfectly respectable widow and I don't intend to be otherwise. People look at widows with a differnt eye than they do married women.

BEN COOK

(FOLLOWS R. U? BEHIND) But, Simonson, you ought to marry me.

SIMONSON

For the seventeenth time you know I'm going to refuse you. There is nothing like being widder, and if I married you no telling when I would get a chance to be a widder again, but so long as you've got your mind set on me, Ben Cook, my advice to you is not to get discouraged just keep right on proposing.

BEN

I swear I believe you're a actin this way jest to keep me a dangling like a fish on a line, and I don't like it. I am getting sore in the gills. Men have their rights that's what I say.

SIMONSON

They have, have they? Well, what about women's rights? We don't have none. When we are young girls we spend all our days and nights a studying how to catch a man and if we don't catch him---we are miserably looked down on as old maids, and one state is as bad as another and worse. The only chance we women have of leading a free and independent, joyful existence is when we have caught a husband and killed him off. We are widders after that, Ben Cook, with the right to make a man dangle as long as he will stay on the hook. And for the sake of my sex, that is what I am going to do to you. (TO AMOS) Brother dear, I have been ashore marketing and we've got enough supplies to last us a month. Now as I am woman of only ten thousand words and I

use them all at once I'm going

in and cook some beans. (EXITS L.)

BEN

Chickens gone home to roost. I'm a landlubber if I try to propose to that woman again. Durn the whole business. .Come on, Captain, let's go and get a drink.

AMOS

No, Ben, I aint touched liqour in twenty years---not since--

BEN

Land of lubber don't talk about that, Captain. Quit brewin' about it. Jest because you done something away back there about the time of Noah's ark--

AMOS

He had a wife and a little child, Ben. That is what always makes me feel the worst---a wife and baby. I am always thinking about them.

BEN

Well, the child must be grown afore this time, and as for the wife, a widder must be a pretty pleasant situation according to your ~~good~~ sister Simonson's opinion. Anyhow it was done when ye were drunk, and not responsible, so durnk ye couldn't even remember it.

AMOS

All I can remember was werwere on the ship a bound for Stickney's reef. We were drinkin' and cuttin' up. I never seen him afore, his face was strange, but now it haunts me night and day. I remember I started for my fo'castle and Brin Hawkins hove in sight with a mug of whiskey.

BEN

I allus blamed Brin Hawkins for it, him knowin' the devil were to pay when you got on one of your drinkin' spells.

AMOS

All I can remember after drinkin' a little more was Brin Hawkins a shakin' me and starin' at me with eyes that looked like dead fishes from fright telling me for the lords sakes to wash the blood from my hands, that he was---thar---the stranger (WITH EFFORT) dead. And then you came in and all three together, we shoved the dead body overboard.

BEN

Shh---somebody may be a hearin' you. Forget it Capttain, that was twenty years ago--you are all right.

AMOS

I should have given myself up to the law and taken my medicine. Ben, you know what luck screaming seal gulls mean to a fisherman---well last night I dreamed of them.

BEN

(STARTS) Sea gulls? Good Lord, you didn't Amos!

AMOS

The gulls were circling around my little girl, Flotsom's head, and she was a drifting away from me, and the dream means Ben, it means that the old sin of mine is going to rise up some how to separate me and my little gal.

BEN

BEN

Maybe it aint as bad a luck as that, Amos. Maybe it just means that you are going fishing and tumble over board and drowned to death. (FLOTSOM AND SIMONSON ARGUE OFF STAGE) Listen aint that Flotsom now?

FLOTSOM

(ENTERS L.) Don't let her hit me, daddy. Don't let her!

SIMONSON

Young Miss, your father is going to hear about this. What do you think she's doing? What do you think? She's carrying on a flirtation with them idle rich that live over by the beach resort on shore. She's invited a man to come here and see us. Amos, she's headin' for hades.

FLOTSOM

I aint neither. Daddy, it's nothing bad. I met him ~~one~~ day when you were ashore. He was in a mortarboat and ~~it~~ ran out of gasoline. He stopped at the lighthouse to get some gasoline for it, and then his aunt who was in the boat tumbled overboard and I saved her from drownin'. He's just coming over to tell me what a brave girl I am and to tell you to daddy. Oh you don't care do you. Say you don't. You don't do you? (PINCHES HIS CHEEK AND LOOKS INTO HIS EYES)

AMOS

Flotsom, when you smile at me like that I don't care what you do. Simonson, mind your fool temper and leave the gal alone.

SIMONSON

All right, let her go to perdition---first thing you know she'll marry some awful thing like that over there. (EXITS L.)

FLOTSOM

Aint she awful daddy? She's getting to be a terrible scold. Ben Cook, you're just wasting your time, and you ought to thank the stars that she won't marry you. I'd be sorry for you if she did. I don't mean a word of it. I don't mean bad things about anybody. Thanks daddy for not being mad at me. I'm going to ~~take~~ go up in the tower and watch for this rich man, His name is Elmer---aint it just like poetry. (LAUGHS AND EXITS L.)

AMOS

(CHUCKLES) What a little ray of sunshine she is.

BEN

Amos, that's what your dream means about the sea gulls. Flotsom is growin' into a young lady and she's going to be fall in love---that's what it means. It's time she did. She's no longer a wee little girl. She's a fine lookin' young lady.

AMOS

Oh I can't imagine that, Ben. My little Flotsom married and away from the light house with a husband to take care of and only coming back to see me once a year.

BEN

Once a year nothing---there would be Thanksgivings---Christmasses, and the Fourth of Julyses and just think of the first Thanksgiving day (SLAPS KNEE AND LAUGHS) And Flotsom a visitin' home and settin' with her husband on one side of the table, and me and your sister Simonson on the other side and ye at the head. (SHOUTS WITH LAUGHTER)

AMOS

Would be sort of nice, wouldn't it?

BEN

And think of her coming home a Christmas time all fixed up in furs and frills. A comin' home and a thorwin' her arms around ye and a huggin and kissin' ye till ye couldn't draw yer breath.

AMOS

And she is just the little mess mate that would not forget her old dad.

BEN

And think of her the next Christmas after that or maybe the Fourth of July a holdin' a little white bundle in her arms--a baby!

AMOS

What's that, Ben? (EXCITED) A baby? A baby ye said it belonging to Flotsom---why man, she aint only a baby herself.

BEN

And the baby's name would be Amos---little skipper Amos.

AMOS

What if it was twins.

BEN

Well, my name aint so bad soundin' (LAUGHS) What if it was triplets.

AMOS

Or what if it was--

BEN

Wait we're countin' our babies before they're hatched. But just hink if it did happen. We'd call it little Skipper Amos a rolling over the deck.

AMOS

A rolling over the deck. A takin' in the bridge

BEN

And a givin' us all orders.

AMOS

(ROARS WITH LAUGHTER) A givin' us all orders.

BEN

(LAUGHING) Come on, Amos, I've got to have a drink on that and you can watch me drink it. (THEY EXIT R. U LAUGHING MERRILY)

***** NUMBER ONE *****

BEN

(ENTERS L. FOLLOWING SIMONSON) Simonson, will you marry me?

SIMONSON

(TAKES OUT BOOK AND MAKES A MARK) Nope!

BEN

What are you doin' that for?

SIMONSON

Every time you propose to me I mark it down

This

the twenty third time.

BEN

Simonson, I aint gonna keep this up always.

SIMONSON

Remember that old asying If at first you don't succeed try try again.

BEN

Yes, but durn it all you're just keep me danglin' like a fish. It aint right.

SIMONSON

Well, Ben, I can't marry you now. I'm too busy watchin' Flotsom. I'm afraid she is going to fall in love with that rich feller that comes over from the shore to see her all of the time.

BEN

Does seem kinda funny all the extra visits he makes to tell her how brave she is for savin' his aunt's life.

SIMONSON

There is is now with him. Ben let's go in the other room and see what he says to her. They're coming in the house now. (THEY EXIT L.)

FLOTSOM

(ENTERS R. WITH ELMER) Oh come on in, Mr. Elmer. Gee, you've never met my folks what stay here, have you.

ELMER

No, Flotsom, every time that I come here I always forget to see anyody but you.

FLOTSOM

Oh and I could just talk to you for years and years about society and swell people. Gee, I wish I could learn fine manners like they have. You'll teach me won't you? I know I'm just ignorant and funny appearin to the rich ladies at the beach where you are. And it makes me so mad, so darn mad--

ELMER

(LAUGHING) Well, Flotsom, if I am going to be your teacher, I'm not going to let you swear.

FLOTSOM

Swear? I only said darn. That isn't anything. You ought to hear me when I quarell with Aunt Simonson. Sometimes I cuss like a pirate. Guess maybe I shouldn't though. I reckon I would have never begun to cuss at all if my mother had lived.

ELMER

(TAKING HER HANDS) My mother is dead too, little girl.

FLOTSOM

And it kinda makes your heart ache when you think about mother's that are dead, don't it? I dry for my mother lots of times, but then when you've got a dad that makes it different, don't it?

ELMER

Yes, little girl, but my father is dead also. You see my father left home for a sea trip years ago, and never came back to my mother and

me. I seldom speak of him. I would rather not think of him. I don't even bear his name---Hamilton, it was John Hamilton, you see his desertion broke my mother's heart. When she died, my aunt adopted me--and I bear her name of Elmer.

FLOTSOM

Oh I am mighty sorry---I sorta made you tell me things that perhaps you'd rather not. I am so sorry about your mother too, and I'd just like to peep right into heaven's windows and tell her so.

ELMER

Flotsom, did I tell you that my aunt has taken a great interest in you as well as myself. And she wants to send you to school. She is coming over here to talk to your father about it. It's a school in Boston, for girls. Flotsom, did you know I had a dream last night?

FLOTSOM

Gee---did ya? I had a night mare myself. Ate some pickles and ice-cream.

ELMER

Flotsom, I dreamed that you and I were married.

FLOTSOM

My gosh what did you eat?

ELMER

Don't ask questions like that, little girl, just tell me that you love me and that you will be mine.

FLOTSOM

Let me think. Whee! That one took my breath. I---I do love you.

ELMER

Flotsom, my little sweetheart. (TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS)

JOEY

(COMES DOWN FROM R.) Flotsom! He kissed you.

FLOTSOM

No he didn't. You come in too soon.

JOEY

Listen, you. She is my girl. You don't mean honest by her. I know what a promise of marriage from a feller like you means.

FLOTSOM

Joey, you keep out of this. I don't like you at all any more. You're so meddlesome.

JOEY

I love you, Flotsom. And I am going to make you mine no matter what I have to do.

ELMER

Now wait a minute, sonny. Let's talk this over man to man. We both care for Flotsom and the choice was for her to make. She made it and I am the man. It isn't easy for you to give her up I know, and that is the reason I overlooked what you started to say just now. Don't think that just because a man wears a clean collar that he can't have a clean heart just as well. And don't think that I can't love Flotsom

as honestly as you love her, because I can and do.

JOEY

Island folk should take up with island folks. Do you reckon that her father, the captain will ever give her up to a city chap like you? (AMOS ENTERS L) Captain, come here, tell this man that he aint got no right to be makin' love to Flotsom

ELMER

Captain, I love your daughter, and I ask your consent to make her my wife? Flotsom told me that she loved me.

AMOS

So the little mess mate loves you. I wasn't figurin' on that. Joey, I would sooner it be you, but if she loves Mr. Elmer, I aint going to come between her and happiness.

JOEY

It is right that the gal should go to the one that cares the most for her, aint it? Well, I'll prove that he don't love her like me. Do you love her well enough to marry her as I would marry her. Knowing that same and disgrace is hanging over her? Knowing that she couldn't look folks in the face if they could tell her what I can?

ELMER

How dare you try to blacken her name. Take that back or I'll--

JOEY

T'wasn't Flotsom I meant. It's her dad. When I took care of you Captain, when you had the fever one night you was raving in delerium you said things you shouldn't have. Now listen I aint got no grudge against you but I love Flotsom sommuch I am going to ha ve heret any cost.q I warn't going to tell what you said in your fever

AMOS

Joey!

JOEY

The captain is a murderer and is hiding from the law!

AMOS

I ain't no murderer! It's a lie.

JOEY

He let it out to me in his fever talk. He murdered a man twenty years ago on a ship bound for Stickney's Reef. I aint forgotten a word. Brin Hawkins and Ben Cook helped to sink the body overboard. Captaintk forgive me but I had to tell so this man would give up Flotsom. He won't marry her now but I will. I'll marry her if you did murder.

AMOS

(IN AGONY) It's a lie! It is a lie! I never done it!

ELMER

Whether you done it or not---it is your God you willhave to answer to ---not me.

JOEY

John Hamilton was your father's name, wasn't it? Flotsom told me so.

ELMER

What of it?

JOEY

John Hamilton was the name of the man the captain murdered.

ELMER

Great God! This has come between Flotsom and me---no! no! Look up, Captain, deny this awful story, for God's sake deny it.

AMOS

I do deny it. (TO ELMER) I never murdered no one!

ELMER

Say that again, Captain, take my hand and say it. (HOLDS OUT HAND)

AMOS

(STARTS TO, THEN BREAKS) John Hamilton's son, I can't take your hand--- I can't do it---when I look into your face I see your father---it is just as Joey says---I did it! I did it, God help me! (BOWED HEAD) (FLOTSOM'S VOICE IS HEARD OFF STAGE) Shh! Don't let the little mess mate know--not till tomorrow. Then I will give myself up to the law and take my medicine as I should. Tomorrow I will be ready for what is to come. (EXITS L.)

***** NUMBER TWO) *****

AMOS

(GOES TO D. R.) Come in, Mr. Elmer. I want to tell you that so far as is in my power I am going to pay for the wrong I have done you and you're. The thought of bringing disgrace and trouble to my little Flotsom has kept me from it all of these years, but now I am going to let the law go on. Them that has the law in charge, have my story. They are coming to take me away at sunset.

ELMER

Captain Barton, for Flotsom's sake I would have spared you this punishment. What good will it do now for you to go to prison? It cannot wipe out your crime, and it still stands between Flotsom and me. I cannot marry the daughter of the man who murdered my own blood.

AMOS

I asked you to come over here because of Flotsom. She don't know anything about this yet. Now you say you love my little girl. Well, Flotsom aint nothing but a little island girl, no manners no education I want her to be happy---to be somebody. I am going to tell you a story that will only hurt me---old Amos Barton and I deserve it. You see it is like this---

FLOTSOM

(ENTERS R. SMILING) Here you are, you old sascal, I've been hunting all over the island for you to go fishin' with me. (SEES ELMER) I didn't see you---what is the meaning---anything the matter?

AMOS

Flotsom, I've got something to say to you. Now I don't want no blubbering or begging or questioning. I want ye to be plucky.

FLOTSOM

Plucky, dad? Then it's breakers ahead. Well, I am ready for them.

AMOS

It is something I never calculated to tell you, but it is time now. Do you recollect hearing tell how seventeen years atgo the Hesperus

was beat to pieces out yonder on the rocks? Warn't but a dozen souls saved of all on board,. Among that number were a little bab girl they brought her ashore here, and I carried up to the light house in my arms.

FLOTSOM

Yeah, I always liked that story. The baby died the next morning, and that is the hour I was born to you and mother. Mother said it always seemed as if I was sort of a little sea girl too, and she named me Flotsom.

AMOS

That is the way I have always told it to you, you but now you shall hear the truth---we named you Flotsom--because it war yourself that war saved from the wreck, and the sea gave you to me. You aren't our real child. We never knew who your parents might be.

FLOTSOM

But, dad, the little grave out yonder--

AMOS

That is where we buried our own child the day the baby, you was rescued from the wreck.

ELMER

Captain, Barton, you mean she is not your child? Your own blood,

AMOS

I will take my oath on it.

FLOTSOM

Not your child, dad? Not your Flotsom? I feel so strange, so far away. I don't like it, dad. I won't have it so!

ELMER

Thankk My dear as hard as it may see mt will be for the best. Now I will make you my wife. Thank you for letting me know the truth Captain Barton. I will take Flotsom away with me today--

FLOTSOM

No! No! Dad, I won't go away. It doesn't make any difference about me not being your daughter, does it, dad.

AMOS

Put on your cape and go with Mr. Elmer now. When I make up my mind a thing is for the best I can't stand no other way. And if ye are hankering for the truth---here it is---you aint no real relation, you aint got no real hold on me. It is considerable expense a carin' for ye and I aint as young as I was. I am tired of it. I've been tired of it for quite a spell. Go with Mr. Elmer. He is willing to take you off of my hands. (BURIES FACE) (FIGHTING TEARS TO BE STERN)

FLOTSOM

(SLOWLY GETS COAT) I--I think that you have broken my heart. Daddy, there is a numb feeling here now. But I think that when it wakes up it will tell me that it is---broken. But I know how to be plucky-- I m no cry baby. I don't care to be ---where I am not wanted---perhaps to morrow you will be sorry and max your little mess mate some, even if I am only Flotsom that was washed ashore with driftwood, and other no account things. I---I am never coming back to you daddy---unless --you send for me---and I am not going to kiss you good bye neither.

-----unless you ask me to. (X TO ELMER) I'll go with you, Mr. Elmer. And I am glad to go---glad! glad! (EXITS R. SOBBING)

ELMER

I want you to understand this, Captain Barton you renounce all right to her? You will never try to put in any sort of claim.

AMOS

When she stepped out that door just now, she went out of my life for ever. Keep the news of what has become of her old daddy away from her. as long as possible, and when it does come out---make her think that I am bad-bad to the core, the more she turns against me the easiere it will be for the little mess mate.

ELMER

Good bye, Captain Barton. I am sorry for you, but I cannot---I cannot forgive you. (EXITS R.)

SIMONSON

(ENTERS L. WITH BEN) We have been listening at the door. Oh Amos!

AMOS

I said she wasn't my child. I lied to her. Ben, twas for her good to keep trouble off her.

SIMONSON

Oh I don't care, what you have done, Amos, you are my brother and the best man that ever lived. No wonder Ben Cook wouldn't tell me why you wanted your suit case packed---he just said you was goin' some where. I didn't know---I put in a jar of pickles.

BEN

I put in my deck of cards, Captain.

AMOS

Where I'm a goin' they don't play cards, what I would like to have is the bible Flotsom gave me for Christmas.

SIMONSON

Reckon ye will want yer red underwear too. Any how I'm gonna put 'em in.

AMOS

I want everything that is off little Flotsom.

JOEY SIMONSON

I reckon ye'll want all the hankerchiefs ye've got.

BEN

Now the captain aint gonna snivel after he gets ther if thats what yer drivin' at, Simonson.

SIMONSON

No, but I reckon he'll want to blow his nose, Ben Cook, snivel or no snivel.

JOEY

(ENTERS EXCITED) Captain I have just come over from the mainland. The officers are coming for you. I had my share in getting you into this. But I aint sorry that I separated Flotsom and that Elmer chap, but I didn't mean to get you in bad. Captain, why don't you sail away on a whaling vessle. I'll help you.

I give my word that I'd be here when they come, and I am going for what I have done. Don't worry, Joey. I forgive you. It had to come sooner or later. I knew that dream of the sea gulls would bring it.

JOEY

I am starting for Potato Island---the wind is blowing the waves---and I wish to God that I'll fall out of the boat and drown before I reach there! (EXITS SOBBING R.)

SIMONSON

(SEES BEN COOK WHISTLING TO FIGHT THE TEARS) Ben Cook, you delpatied old devil---if you aren't whistling at a time like this. If my extinct husband had of done that I would have refused to have been his widow. (EXITS L.)

AMOS

My little Flotsom. I can see her now as she stood before me in the prow of the boat. The window blowing her pretty hair. The roses in her cheeks her smile---her laugh---(BREAKS DOWN) I shan't never see her no more, Ben---I am just an old direlect that the waves have washed upon the shoals.

BEN

Yes, Captain, we are just one continual break down afore and aft.

AMOS

I shan't never see her no more.

FLOTSOM

(OFF STAGE IN DISTANCE) Daddy! Daddy!

AMOS

What's that?

BEN

It's her!

FLOTSOM

(ENTERS R. (RUSHES TO AMOS ON KNEELS) Daddy, I dragged the truth out of them, the whole truth about Edward Edmer's father. I knew that you were keeping something from me. You meant to keep it from me, that's why you said you didn't care for me, and that you were tired of me. But I don't care what you have done. Your body may have been wicked but your soul never was.

AMOS

Go away---back to them---I am not your father. I have no claim on you.

FLOTSOM

Dad--look at me, look into my eyes. They are like my mother's eyes. You have said that time and time again. Look into my eyes now and tell me while I have my arms aroujd your neck. Tell me you have no claim upon me, say again that I am not your child if you dare.

AMOS

No I can't. I cannot lee to you any more. You are my own child. Mine! Mine! (EMBRACES HER)

BEN

(EXITS BUMBBERING LOULDY) And I'm gonna get the hell out of here!

FLOTSOM

Gee, daddy, you have been keeping this from me all of these years. My what a lot of praying I'll have to do for you.

AMOS

I aint never asked him to forgive---I had no excuse --but the liqour.

FLOTSOM

It was the liqour that done the murder, not my dad. And, Daddy, I'll tell God so- --every night while you are away. And I'll mind the light house daddy. Every night the light will shine---it's rays will meet the waves and send their song of love to you--always! Always.

AMOS

(AS A KNOCK UPON THE DOOR IS HEARD) They have come now, Flotsom. It is the law to take me. Don't cry, Flotsom. Pull yourself together.

FLOTSOM

(SMILING BRAVELY) I'm all right, daddy, I won't cry.

AMOS

Flotsom, look at me. I want to meet your last look a free man. (LOOKS AT HER) Smile, Flotsom. Smile, I will come back to you---some--day ---some day. (BACKS OUT DOOR)

FLOTSOM

Good bye, Daddy/ I will smile always---I will wait and smile- The light house will reflect my smile to you. Daddy! Daddy! (FIGHTS THE TEARS. HE PASSES THE WINDOW WAVING BACK) I'm not cryin'! I'm smilin' dad. I'm smilin'. (KNEELS BY WINDOW SOBBING SOFTLY)

***** NUMBER THREE *****

SIMONSON

Law sakes! I've scrubbed and cooked till my fingers is dead. Oh I can hardly wait till he gets back. It seems so long.

JOEY

(ENTERS R.) Simonson, I caught the biggest nicest white fish for the Captains dinner. Just think today he comes back. I wonder if he has ever forgiven me. Seems like all the fishermen on the island are dressed up to greet the captain when he comes back.

SIMONSON

Why shouldn't they. Everybody loved him. Is Ben Cook dressed up too? I wonder what he looks like.

BEN

(ENTERS RIDICULOUS OUTFIT) Don't have to wonder--here he is. Who'd you think come down to the island---that Edward Elmer feller. Taint no good idea for him to see the captain---I don't think. He's been bad luck to us from the start. The captain was lucky though to get paroled for good behavior wasn't he?

JOEY

Yes---but how can I ever look the captain in the eye.

BEN

Now, Joey, this aint no time to blubber. We've got to have a cheerful countenance for the Captain. He don't want no sadness. We got to think up some good news to tell him.

JOEY

Only good news I know is that Brin Hawkins sailed into port this morning, took sick and died.

BEN

Queer thing. The only man that see'd the captain do the stabbin' should come home after a three year whalin' voyage and be sick and die just afore the captain gets out. He didn't say nothin' about the captain afore he plunged off, did he?

JOEY

Not that I know of. Where's Flotsom though? She aint seein' that Elmer feller be she?

SIMONSON

Well, what do you care? Flotsom don't love you, Joey, and you'd just as well be castin' your eyes in the direction at the other girls.

FLOTSOM

(ENTERS L. SINGING) Oh he's coming home today. Today! Just think! Dear old dad.

SIMONSON

Landsakes, Flotsom, ye aint been up in that tower scrubbin' that light agin, be ye?

FLOTSOM

I've only cleaned it six times today, Simonson. The brighter the brass shines, the more it's going to please dad. I tell you I chanted dad dad with every rub until I got out breath. Now we mustn't any one of us look sad when he gets home. We must laugh and be gay, and funny.

SIMONSON

Yes, you just act natural, Ben.

FLOTSOM

Listen! That's him coming. now. Now let's not even act like he's been away. We'll be calm as though nothing ever happend. He's just been on a fishin' voyage and got back. Be calm. Calm!

CAPTAIN

(ENTERS R.) Little Mess mate.

FLOTSOM

Oh, daddy! Daddy! You back again You've been away a thousand years. Oh dad, I never went to sleep a single night that I did not think of you behind those prison bars. I never sat down to the table without a sob for your vacant chair, but now you are home and free once more, Dear old eyes, dear old hair, and dear tears on your cheeks. Daddy, I am so happy that I am ready to die.

BEN

Aye Flotsom, I'm actin calm--calm as a hurricane. Captain, I am glad you are home from your fishin' trip.

JOEY

Captain, I can draw a full breath now that you are free. Forgive me again I ask you, but I loved Flotsom so.

SIMONSON

Amos, I aint felt so happy since I have

been a widder. (HANDS HIM SOME LETTERS) Now here is some mail that was brought here for you this morning. I suppose it is some advertisement or something---nothing important. Now sit down.

AMOS

I reckon I better. I---I'm grown sort of old I guess. I'm kinda tired

BEN

Well, Captain, things have happend like everything since you been gone. Six marriages one death--two berths, and a fire on the island. Si Higgins and Patrica Rollins are married and they've got a ~~elaf~~ calf-- I mean their cow has.

AMOS

(LAUGHS) How's affairs between you and Simonson getting along?

SIMONSON

Affairs aint getting along at all. After proposing to me for the thirty fourth time, Ben Cook stopped off short about three months ago. And the Lord may know what he stopped for, I don't. He just quit askin' me to marry him. But me bein' a widder woman I aint curious.

AMOS

(LAUGHS) Looks like a squal comin'. I guess I'll go down to the lea of the island and haul in the nets. ~~Come~~

JOEY

I'll go along with you, Amos.

FLOTSOM

All right, daddy, and when you get back supper is ready. I know you are hungry from your long--long fishin' trip. (EXITS L. AS THEY EXIT RL)

AMOS BEN

My lng--long fishin' trip. I'll go too. (THEY EXIT)

SIMONSON

Dodgin' me. That Ben Cook is avoidin' me. That old monkey he quit proposin' on the thirty fourth time, and I was gonna take him on the thirty fifth. The old stingy devil. (EXITS HOUSE)

ELMER

(ENTERS L.) Flotsom, I have come back to you. Haven't you a welcome for me? I wrote you.

FLOTSOM

And I wrote you---you must never come here. Not unless you could shake hands with my dad, I real earty hand shake---

ELMER

I would try for your sake, Flotsom, for I am ready to do anything I love you.

FLOTSOM

That's it you would try, but you would never really forgive him. No, Elmer, I can never marry you. I'll never marry any one else for loving you, but you must go---for I love my dad best of all.

ELMER

You mean good bye---good bye for keeps.

FLOTSOM

Good bye, for keeps. (EXITS L.PHE EXITS R.)

SIMONSON

(L I ENTER) For lands sakes I'm all astir with this excitement I can hardly peel potatoes what with Amos comin' back and Ben Cook actin the way he does. (BEN ENTERS SITS DOWN AND TWIRLS HIS THUMBS) Speakin' of proposals, Ben Cook, I'd like to know why you stopped on the thirty fourth time when I was gonna take you on the thirty fifth. (PAUSE) I say when I was gonna take you on the thirty fifth. But I reckon I could guess the reason. It's because some of the old maids on Potato Island have been setting their caps for you and turning your head. But let me tell you, Ben Cook, them old maids would take anything that wore pants and could fill them. Life is hard for a woman who is a widder and man stops proposing to her once he gets started at it. There ought to be a law against breach of proposin same as against breach of promise. Ben Cook, is that all you can do? Sit there and whirl your thumbs. One way and then the other. Durned if I don't think it's made you foolish. Ben Cook if my extinct husband had ever whirled his thumbs---I'd---

BEN COOK

(EXPLODES) Whirl or twirl--don't ye ever mention your extinct husband to me again don't ever do it agin' Dern ye !

SIMONSON

What on earth do ye mean?

BEN COOK

I mean that when you thought I was on a fishin' trip awhile ago I was steerin' my course back to where you used to live, and I landed a bigger fish than I was looking for.

SIMONSON

My goodness sakes, Ben Cook, you don't mean that you have found out?

BEN COOK

I mean that I found that you aint never had a husband named Simonson. You aint never been married at all.

SIMONSON

Oh, Ben I never wanted you to know that.

BEN

Good bye, Simonson.

SIMONSON

You don't mean good bye, do you, Ben, you don't mean that you're going to let a little thing like an extinct husband come between us.

BEN COOK

Little thing! Maybe you're so steeped in shame that you think it a little thing, having been a wife to a man that wasn't your husband but by the great horned sponns I don't.

SIMONSON

Wife to man that warn't my--Ben Cook---how dare you. (SCREAMS) Take that back this minute take that back.

BEN COOK

Wa'al warn't you? Who was Archibald Simonson then if he warn't your husband and you lived with him and took his name?

SIMONSON

Archibald Simonson warn't nobody, he never in his life, lived nor moved or had been.

BEN

She's blowed her main sail---she's off her head.

SIMONSON

I invented him.

BEN

Crazy as a stingaree!

SIMONSON

I manufactured Archibald Simonson, name and all, and hadn't I a right? to I'd like to know? What is a poor old maid like me going to do? Stay an old maid and be called that/ I just invented my extinct husband so I could say I was a widow instead of an old maid.

BEN

And you've kept me dangling and proposing to you thirty four times claimin' to be a widder?

SIMONSON

It is true, I can't deny it.

BEN

Then let me tell you this, Simonson. If there is any more proposin' to do, and dangling it is you that have got to do it.

SIMONSON

You mean to say that if I ask you to marry me you will say yes, Ben?

BEN

Maybe---after you've asked me thirty four times. (SITS) I aint made up my mind yet. Warn't never very fond of old maids any how. An old maid like you will have to do it thirty five times before I give in.

SIMONSON

Thirty five times is humiliating but I needn't make 'em as far as apart as you did. Now for the first time, Ben Cook, knowing that you are going to refuse me, will you marry me?

BEN

Thunder and lightning--trade winds and tide water---yes. (EMBRACE)

AMOS

(ENTERS R.) What's going on, Ben?

BEN

Just this, Amos--Simonson and I are going to be married. (JOEY AND ELMER ENTER R. FLOTSOM ENTERS L.) Everybody witness that I am to be a married man, and ~~someday~~---a--

SIMONSON

Extinct husband.

BEN

Not by a damn sight.

AMOS

Folks, I want you all to listen to something. Simonson, that letter you gave me and you said it wasn't very important. Listen to this. It's from Brin Hawkins written afore he died. Ben, it war him. What do you think of am an that will put murder on another man's soul for twenty years knowing all the time he done it himself. And he didn't own up to it until death scared him into it. Elmer, I can look you the world and God in the face and say I am no murderer.

FLOTSOM

Daddy! Oh I knew it I knew it.

AMOS

Brink Hawkins killed John Hamilton, and robbed him knowing we were all drunk---and he got away with it.

ELMER

Flotsom, there is nothing to come between us. Will you be mine.

FLOTSOM

I will.'

AMOS

I reckon you'll spare her a vist to see me once in awhile---

BEN

Of course he will, Amos, and there will be Christmasses and Thanksgivings and fourth of Julyesses and Easterasses, and maybe Flotsom will be coming back one of these days carryin' a little---

SIMONSON

Ben Cook, come out here in the kitchen--(THEY EXIT L.)

AMOS

(PUTS HANDS ON JOEY'S SHOULDER) Forget it, Joey---my boy.

JOEY

He may be more deservin' of her than me--but he can't love her more---he just can't. (EXITS L. WITH CAPTAIN)

ELMER

Oh, Flotsom I can hardly believe it's true.

FLOTSOM

Well, believe it or not, Mr. Elmer I have accepted you and now I'm waiting?

ELMER

Waiting?

FLOTSOM

Waiting to be kissed.

ELMER

(KISSES HER) My little Flotsom!

BEN

(ENTERS FROM L. WIPING MOUTH) Aint got a thing on me I just had three of 'em!

F I N A L E